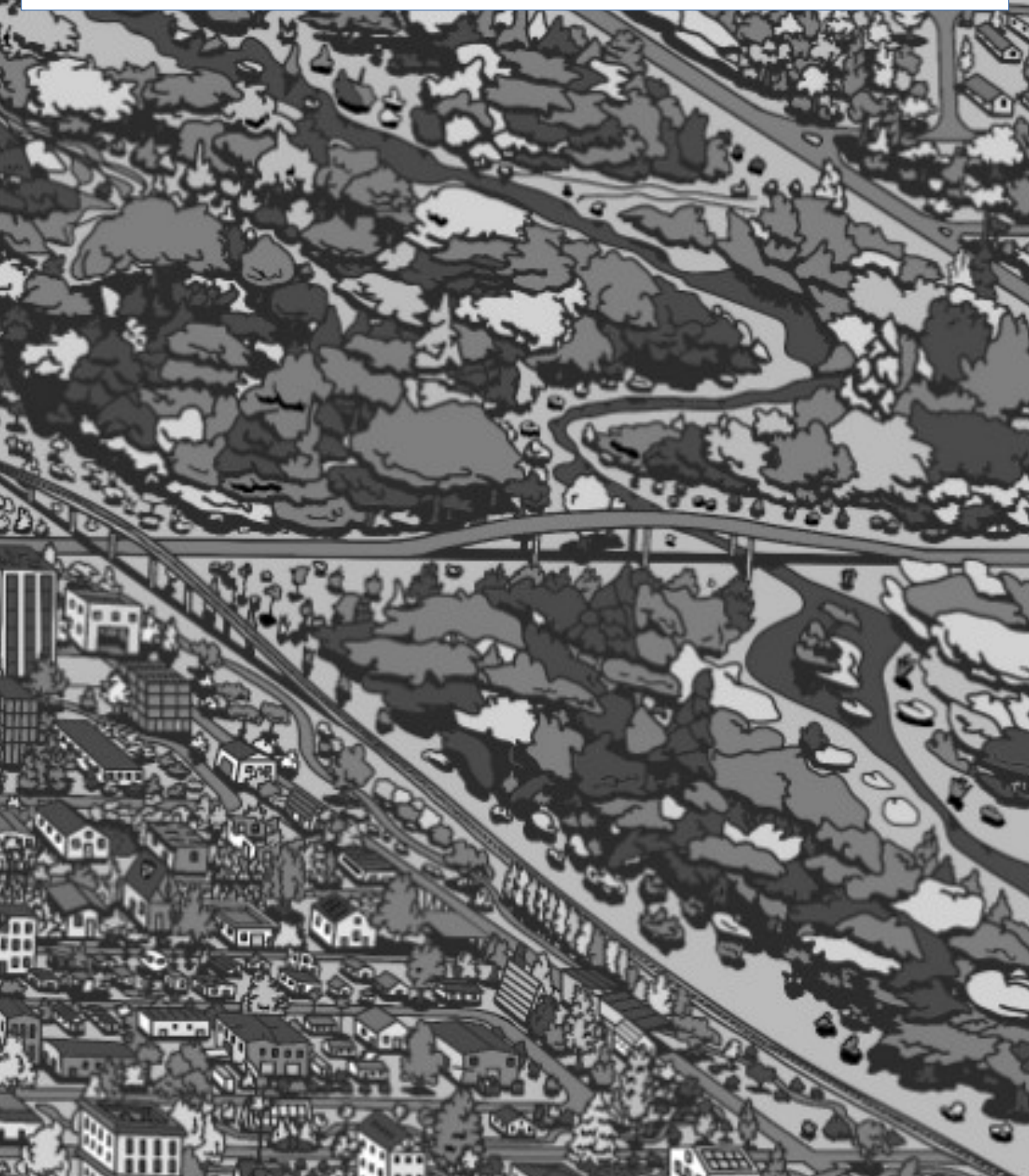
"Is there such a place, where all people are free and valued, no matter who they are?"

Episode 2

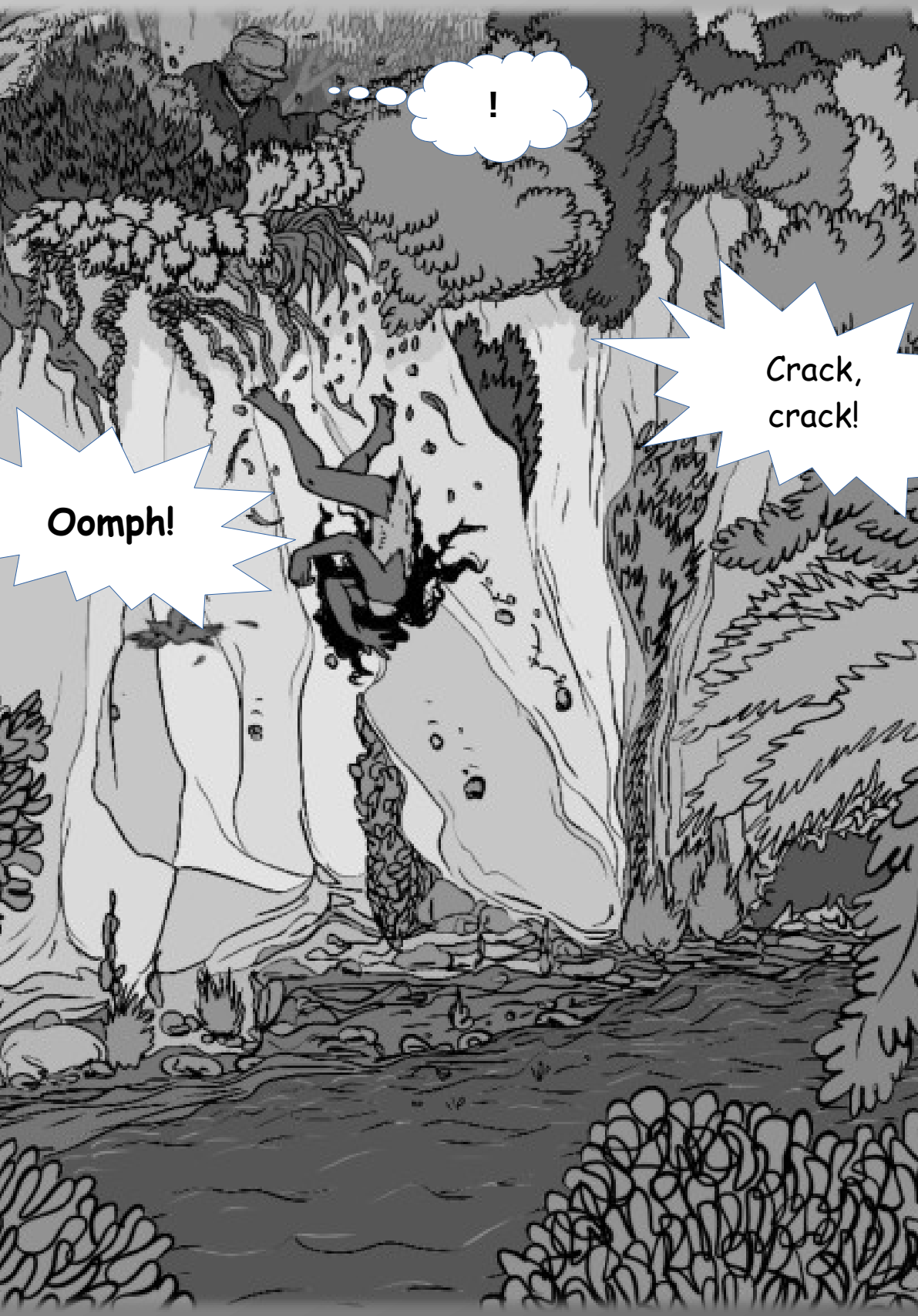
In the woods of Hometown, a family that lives in isolation were introduced. They are part of an illusive network of people that live completely separate from "normal society". Their reasons for living in such a way are valid, and their methods and lifestyles are clever and unique. The "Woodsfolk" live much better "on their own terms", but secrecy about the "outside world" drives a curious member of this family to escape to the "outside". And, she may have gotten "more than she bargained for".



In her amazement, having discovered a strange new world, she quickly lost track of the time and place where she stood. But someone around had not, and quickly took notice of the unfamiliar visitor.

The disturbed fellow could not just "lay around", as he was often weary, especially of newcomers. So he slowly and quietly stood.

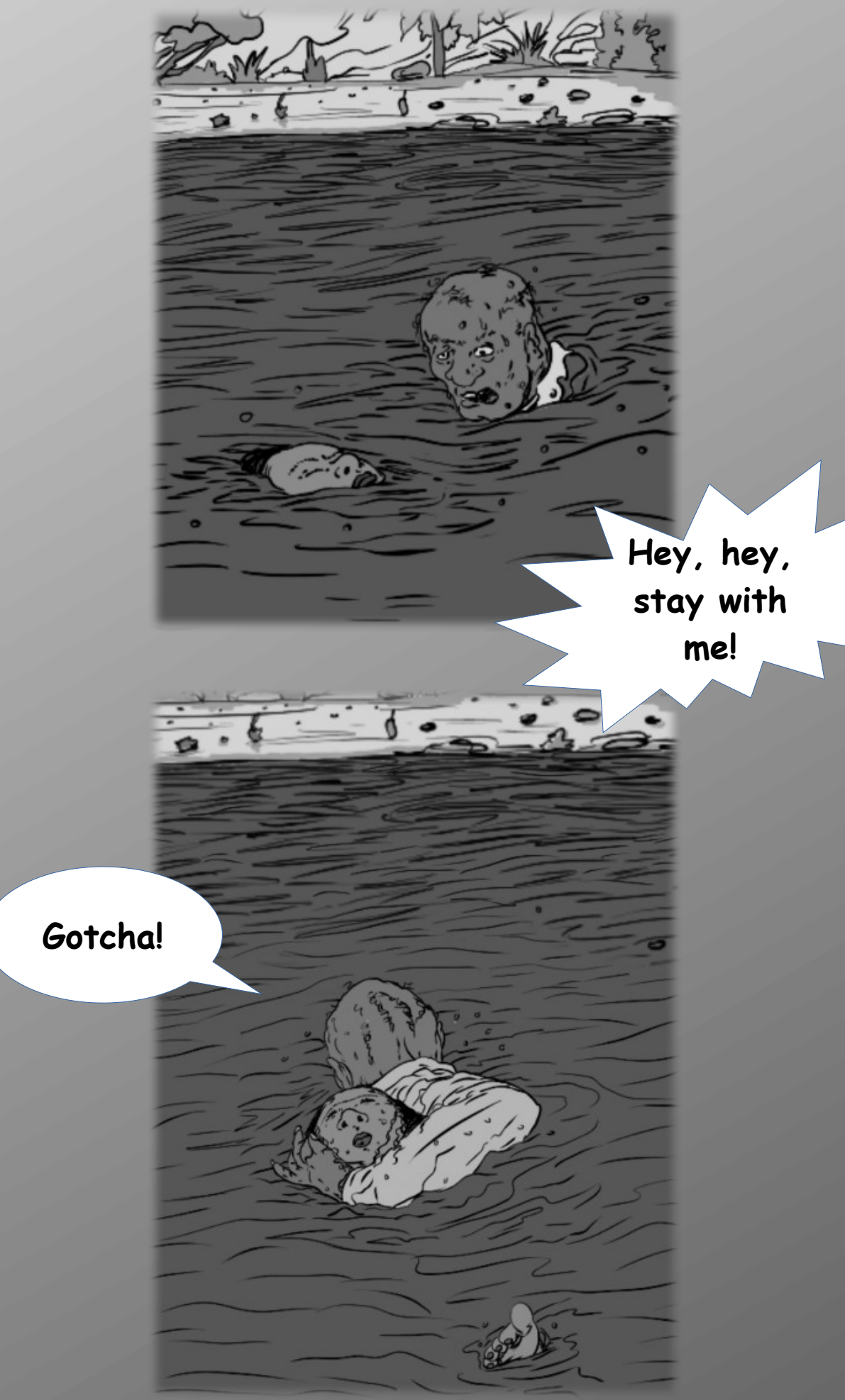
Hey there!
Ahh!


!
Crack, crack!
Oomph!

Splash!
Hey! Hey!
Aghrr!

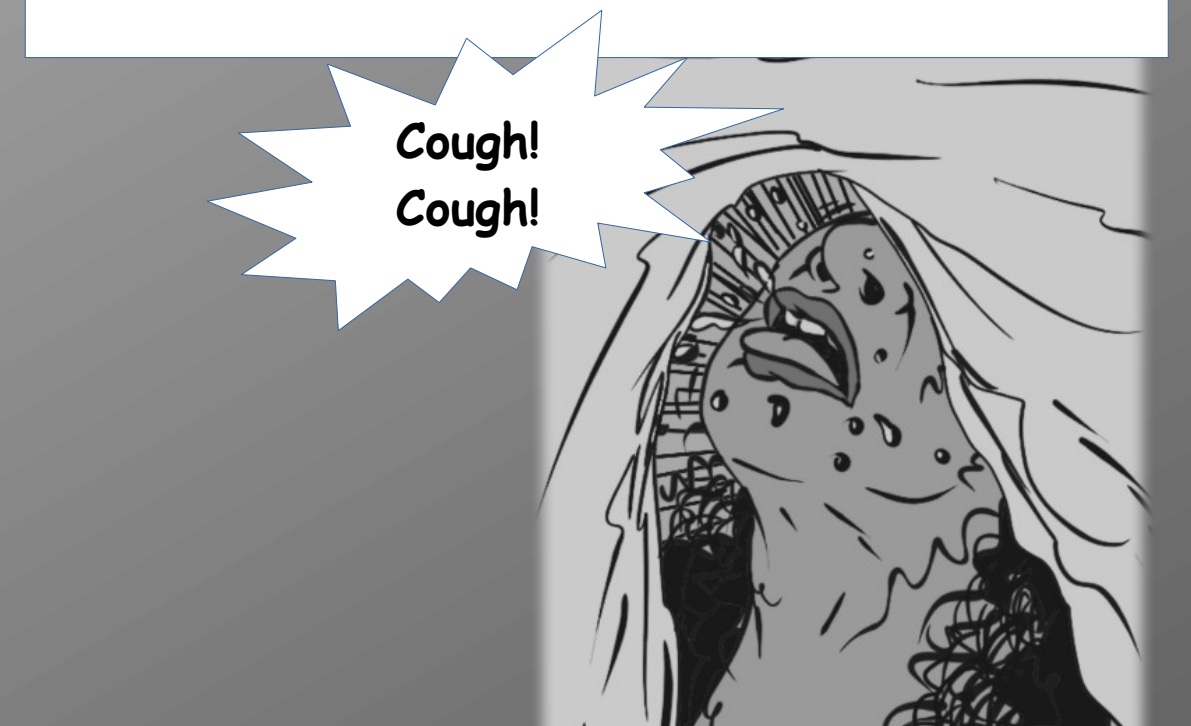
Hey! Keep moving your arms and feet! Hold on!
Aghrr! Heh - Help!

Hey! Hey, hold on, I'm coming!
Frph!


Hey, hey, stay with me!
Gotcha!

Somehow having dropped unhurt into the raging river, barely before drowning, the man heroically pulled the young woman from its currents. But, she was not conscious!

The older man, tired but not lacking effort, suspected the young woman may have "taken-in" water. So he quickly began the cardio-pulmonary resuscitation technique on her, giving her breaths and chest pumps in a frantic but rhythmic pattern. After some time of this urgent exercise, thankfully for the young woman, it was enough to bring her back to consciousness.



After some time, when things were more calm, when they both had settled down and "digested" what had just occurred...

But in her confused state, the young woman seemed to not yet have realized the full extent of her predicament.

After some time, when the young woman calmed down and accepted the man as not a threat, she became lively, and began to present her predicament. However, as clever as she was, she gave only "information-enough" to have the stranger understand and hopefully be of help. But, in a very different dialect and barely understandable to the strange man; the young woman struggled to make herself understood.

Oh, thanks to you kind sir, for extracting me from the raging waters.
Ah, no need for thanks. So, what's your name and what were you doing in the bushes in those hills ?
I live-called "Hinari". I'm from.. well from somewhere markedly different! I..I, I require to find the path to home!
?

Okay, let's slow down, I know you must be shocked. I hardly can understand. Are you here alone?

Yessir.

By the way, they call me "Popeye" out here. Good to meet you, uh, Hi-Hinari?.

Yessir. Good to meet you.

Okay, for me to help you get home, you need to tell me where "home" is...

Well, I understand only that my place of home is in the woods, approaching this location.

You sure speak differently. Wait, you said you live in the woods? Are you homeless?

Home-less? Nossir, I have a place called home. It's approaching these woods. I only require to find my path to there.
Good Lord, in the woods huh? Do you live in a forest cabin or something like it? Do you have a family there?
Huh, ahm.. Yessir.
Okay, let's take it step-by-step. You're an interesting young woman and...
Sir, please I only require shown the path to where I emerged! And, and...
I will - I will, but it's getting late and dangerous that way by now. And we're a long way from where I found you...
?

They walked a few kilometers, to an open area shielded by shrubs and trees, still near the river. There, some individuals and activities were present, and Hinari grew a bit weary when approaching. Despite this, Popeye and her continued their efforts to try to understand each other.

After conversing for some time, they got more acquainted among themselves, especially about their current situations. Like this, it was found that Popeye was a homeless man, and had been in such predicament for a long time. But Popeye wasn't alone in his predicament, he showed Hinari around, where he and the others spent most of their time, in the outdoors, a homeless camp.

That evening, Hinari was introduced to the group. Popeye seemed to be an influential person there, and most seemed friendly and welcoming. But, Hinari was confused, the area looked filthy and unkempt, and noticed some discomfort and scarcity.

So, Mr. Popeye, is this "your place of home"? Do speak more of this please
Well, yes, for now. I'm not sure where you are originally-from but you seem smart and curious...
..you see, Hometown, its people and government, have "pushed us aside". Many of us can't work regularly, have severe health problems, and suffer addictions...
...and those "problems" caused us to become destitute. We can't pay for our necessities; our families and friends "turned their backs on us"; and this society, in many ways, sidelines and punishes those that need help.

You mean to say that, those that "need help" get "punished"? Must "pay" for "vital necessities"? And friends and family refuse to assist you when you are in dire economic predicaments?

And the lively conversation gets Popeye going on a "rant" and a bit agitated...

Fuck yeah! Some kind of place that is, huh? You know, I'm.. I was a teacher, and because I went into some depression and got into alcohol drinking and pornography, I was fired from my job, and I could not get it back. Then, I was denied affordable healthcare and treatment, and ended up in jail after I became homeless...
So you fell ill and you had to produce funds- enough to hand-off in exchange for your needs? There, you fall ill and not be assisted, because you don't have um, um, money?
Exactly! Ya know, I'm starting to like you, you "get it" alright! I've been trying to tell this folks these things are fucked-up! Ya know? Most won't listen! Things shouldn't be like this! Ya know?

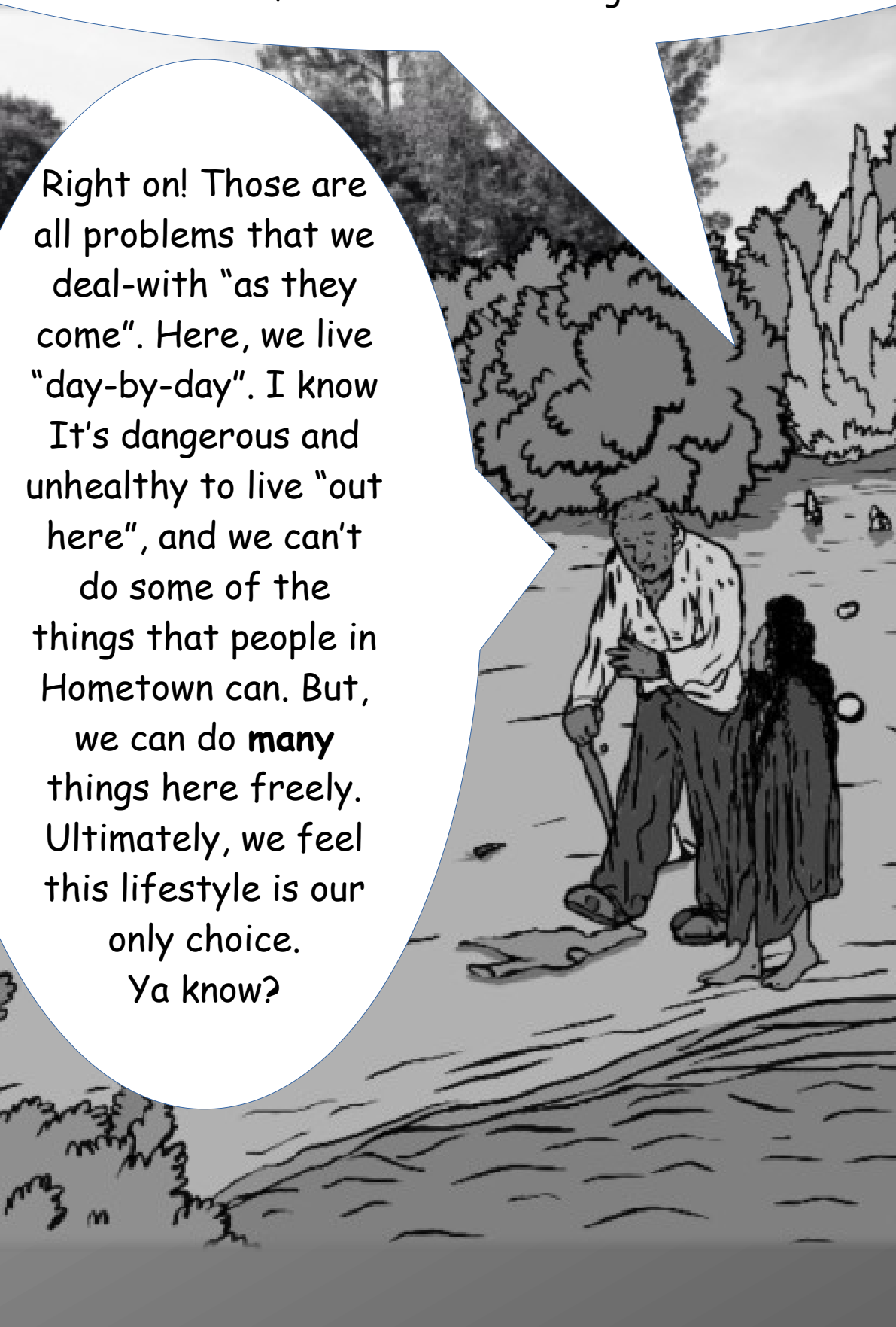
And the lively exchange persisted...

The "cost of living" is abusive in Hometown; all of us here cannot afford to pay for a home, and it is extremely difficult to even qualify to get one. You need to have good credit, a clean criminal record and a lot of money to put as a deposit; which you may lose. And food, utilities and fuel prices are too damn high...

If happy-living is not conducive, how do most people achieve happiness in Huh-Hometown?

Ya know, I don't think most people **are** happy. Most people that live in expensive apartments and homes have to work like beasts just to "keep-up" with their payments, plus the high cost of transportation, insurance and energy. Believe me, I was one of those people.

But it appears unhealthy and precarious here too. Are you content and comfortable here? What is the outcome when persons here get sick, hurt, or a crime occurs? What is done here about clean water and food? And what of education or relaxing activities?


Right on! Those are all problems that we deal-with "as they come". Here, we live "day-by-day". I know It's dangerous and unhealthy to live "out here", and we can't do some of the things that people in Hometown can. But, we can do **many** things here freely. Ultimately, we feel this lifestyle is our only choice. Ya know?

After lively and agreeable arguments about the clearly unfair predicament of Popeye, and those around, subsided; it was turning dark and time to find a place to "settle-in."
Popeye presented Hinari with a spot on the ground to sleep. It had some sheets and a padded quilt. He assured her it was safe there. She looked around, sat, and reluctantly agreed to stay.

Soon, the darkness of night and the peaceful sounds of frogs and insects overwhelmed the noise from nearby Hometown. The moonlight soothed the minds, and soon quiet and cool allowed all at the camp to get a good night's sleep.

Human beings pushing and allowing their "brothers and sisters" to sleep exposed, vulnerable and unsafe, only because they lack the money. Money which was also denied to them for factors often outside of their control. The cruelty and nonsense was almost overwhelming, and endlessly disappointing.

The night had permitted all in the camp to sleep well, and dawn was in the other horizon.

Popeye had not slept "this well" in a long time. And in his dreams he felt something new had come to signal a "big change" in his life.

He excitedly walked over to Hinari's sleeping spot...

...but Popeye was utterly surprised by her absence.

In disappointment, he lamented her early departure...

...and the next few moments, he pondered what to do about his surely-coming despair. He picked up a half-bottle of whisky, which had laid on the ground from a past drunken night...

Thankfully, he made the decision to keep the hope and courage that he felt was given to him by this strange young visitor. He chose to make that short and meaningful visit a catalyst for change in his life, and begin to emerge from his sickening dependence.
In that moment, he chose to help others, just as he helped that young woman survive to the next day.
Popeye eventually turned away from the drinking and hyper-sexuality, and began a simpler healthier life.
And in silence, he wished that young lady well, and that she eventually found her way home.

To be continued...

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